



Washington Sea Grant Program

University of Washington

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December 30, 2011

Dr. Leon M. Cammen  
Director, National Sea Grant Office  
1315 East-West Highway  
SSMC-3, Eleventh Floor  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Leon:

This letter is the Washington Sea Grant (WSG) response to the report of the March 2011 Site Review Team. On behalf of WSG, the University of Washington (UW) and our stakeholder participants, I would like to offer sincere thanks to the Site Review Team for their insight, interest and willingness to engage in a constructive evaluation process. We enjoyed hosting the team and are proud to have had the opportunity to highlight the many strengths of our program in the areas of organization and management, stakeholder engagement and collaborative network activities. We appreciate the program commendations and the recognition of many WSG processes and activities as best management practices. We also value the recommendation and suggestions for improving both our program and the support we provide to those who study, manage, use and enjoy Washington's ocean and coasts.

WSG responses to the Site Review Team (SRT) recommendation and suggestions are as follows:

#### RECOMMENDATION

*For more than forty years, WA SG's Marine Advisory Services have distinguished the University of Washington by providing timely, science-based education programs to a broad range of coastal stakeholders. The College of the Environment is fortunate to have WA SG's engagement expertise and capacity. The SRT recommends that UW utilize this WA SG expertise in developing the outreach/engagement component of the College of the Environment, and appoint WA SG to lead its coastal and marine division.*

The rationale for this recommendation is understandable (although we would like to point out that WSG contributions to UW over the past forty years have not been limited to the Marine Advisory Services). When the UW Board of Regents approved the plan for the new College of the Environment (College) in 2008, it endorsed substantial personnel investments and a target of 10 new professional staff to establish and deliver technical

support to faculty, students and external partners. The new staff members were to be responsible for academic knowledge and technology transfer to a wide range of university partners, developing products and tools and providing core in-house expertise to benefit multiple academic units. While much broader in scope than Sea Grant's traditional ocean and coastal focus, the expanded extension capability appeared entirely consistent with WSG's mission and approach.

Today, that vision and approach have been overwhelmed by budget and academic realities. Over the past three years, UW state funding has been cut in half and the state still faces an estimated \$2 billion shortfall for the 2011-2013 biennium. We are entering the third year of a salary freeze, and about 900 staff positions have been eliminated. In addition, the university is moving forward with activity-based budgeting, and funding implications for public engagement and advisory activities under the new system are unclear.

In 2010, with the concurrence of the interim Dean, WSG completed a survey of outreach activities within the College. The survey catalogued diverse and ongoing outreach activities throughout the College, although today's resource limitations have eliminated some and curtailed any new near-term investment. Establishment of a coastal and marine division and appointment of WSG to lead it probably are not realistic for the foreseeable future.

WSG will continue to work with other college leaders to ensure that our outreach resources are fully integrated into College engagement activities. Two specific ideas for building the college's outreach capacity in an era of fixed or declining budgets are:

- Assistance in development of a college-wide outreach database that can serve a variety of audiences, from advancement to outside organizations looking for engagement services (e.g., coastal hazards talk for Rotary Club)
- Development of an appropriate career ladder that would serve outreach staff in units college-wide

## SUGGESTIONS

*The SRT urges WA SG to develop an appropriate faculty career ladder for Sea Grant Extension staff (i.e., MAS agents). Interim Vice-Provost for Research, David Eaton, should be engaged in the dialogue to consider the public health practitioner faculty model.*

We agree with the need to build an appropriate career ladder for Sea Grant outreach experts. Over the past nine months we have explored options at UW, and two important factors suggest that an expansion of the faculty system may not be the best approach:

- Because UW is not a Land Grant College, there is no separate faculty career ladder for extension, and all UW faculty have appointments within an academic unit. As a non-academic unit, WSG is not eligible to house faculty appointments and, while we could support a faculty member in an academic unit as an extension agent, consideration of WSG needs in performance evaluation and promotion would be secondary to an academic focus on teaching and research.

- UW faculty appointments, including clinical professors, require a terminal degree (commonly a doctorate). Current WSG staff members have been selected on the basis of their outreach and technical expertise and have a mix of educational backgrounds, with most having a master's degree. Addition of faculty positions is likely to create a tiered staff structure, rather than providing coherent WSG career advancement opportunities.

On a more positive note, the professional staff research scientist progression used by the UW Applied Physics Lab (APL) appears to offer real promise as a model for creating a WSG career ladder. APL is also a non-academic unit and uses a multiple grade system that allows scientists to advance in level with education and experience. Higher grades often receive affiliate faculty appointments in academic units. We currently are working with UW Human Resources and the College on options to formalize a career path for extension specialists patterned on APL and using professional staff position designations and grade levels. Such a system would be available to other units within the College and could be coupled with an effort to build stronger ties for outreach staff with academic units, including affiliate faculty status for senior staff.

*The SRT suggests that WA SG explore funding opportunities with the tribal community, including specific projects of interest to the Native American community such as water safety training with tribal fishing communities as an example of successful collaboration.*

We agree with the SRT on the importance of successful collaboration with tribal communities. At the same time, we recognize the disparate fiscal prosperity among tribes and do not want to limit collaboration to those that can afford to contribute funding. When the WSG Advisory Committee discussed this suggestion, the tribal representative suggested that we adopt an open and flexible approach to exploring funding opportunities with tribal partners. At present, for example, the Columbia River Intertribal Fish Commission pays WSG travel costs for fishing safety classes. One related – and priceless – return on investment: the Commission reported no deaths in all in-river fisheries this season as compared to six deaths in fishing operations last year, a reduction they attributed to WSG safety training!

*As WA SG personnel retire, the SRT urges WA SG to continue using the succession planning/training process used with Goodwin/Hoffman for other staff and positions.*

Whenever possible, we will continue to use succession planning and training and have initiated the process for two anticipated retirements in 2012 and 2013. Steve Harbell, a veteran Sea Grant marine field agent in Pacific and Grays Harbor counties, plans to retire in July 2012. Because his position is jointly funded, we have requested transition discussions with Washington State University Extension early in the new year. In addition, Eric Olsson, another long-time marine safety expert, will be leaving in late 2012 or early 2013. He has agreed to stay on for a certain time after his replacement has been selected to help in training and ensure the continuity of important programs like Clean Marina and the

Pacific Coast Congress of Harbor Masters oil spill prevention education. These vacancies also may allow us to expand capabilities in related priority areas like recreational boating and marine tourism.

*The SRT agrees with WA SG's goal of diversifying its funding base and suggests increased attention be devoted to pursuing development activities with private sector interests. As opportunities with the tribes, foundations and private sector are considered, the SRT recognizes that WA SG will need to be sensitive to perceived conflicts of interest. WA SG should consider exploring establishing a "Friends of Washington Sea Grant" to assist with a funding campaign and engage where appropriate, the existing advisory committee in identifying prospective members of a "Friends" group.*

As the SRT report indicates, WSG has worked in recent years to diversify its funding base. In addition to securing funds through national and regional Sea Grant initiatives, as well as local, state and federal agencies, WSG received or leveraged more than \$400,000 from diverse foundation and other sources over the past two years. Following up on the SRT suggestion, WSG discussed establishment of a "Friends of Washington Sea Grant" with staff in the College advancement office, who provided the following advice:

- While the advancement staff can share best practices for raising money from individual donors, it does not have resources to assist in securing small gifts. Such an effort requires launch of a significant campaign in order to raise meaningful amounts of money, as well as a consistent message for inclusion in all public communications about the critical need for individual private donations.
- WSG already has a gift account, so the mechanics of receiving private donations, foundation awards and funds raised by a "Friends" group would be simple.
- Regardless of donor audience, WSG will struggle with the fact that the program is primarily federally funded, and the related perception is that we do not need other sources of funding.
- The WSG advisory committee currently functions in a true advisory capacity to guide the program. Many boards are set up under the guise of an advisory role but really are focused on fundraising. Use of the WSG advisory committee for fundraising would require changes in membership.

WSG will revisit this suggestion in the future, but at present, it is not the highest priority for investment of WSG time and resources.

*WA SG communications staff has provided a service to other departments and agencies by producing communications products. Wherever possible, WA SG should acknowledge its important role by placing Sea Grant and NOAA Sea Grant logos on these products.*

In 2011, WSG communications work for other agencies included projects with the Joint Institute for the Study of the Atmosphere and Ocean, the Puget Sound Nearshore Ecosystem Restoration Project, the College, Snohomish Beach Watchers, NOAA Office of Response and Restoration, the Bainbridge Island Land Trust, Center for Ocean Sciences

Education Excellence-Ocean Learning Communities, Kitsap County Beach Naturalists and the Salish Sea Film Festival. For some, inclusion of other logos would not have been acceptable. For others, adding WSG and NOAA logos was entirely appropriate.

Currently, WSG is developing a formal policy for logo use that will provide clarity on branding collaborative projects. We plan to apply this policy and will discuss it, in advance, with clients. Both logos are routinely applied to in-house publications like *Sea Star*, WSG calendar, WSG program brochures, and all Orca Bowl (National Ocean Sciences Bowl) and NOAA Science Camp products. In other collaborations, WSG will continue to look for opportunities to emphasize our participation through logo placement.

*WA SG produces high quality communication products, primarily in paper formats. The SRT suggests expanding and diversifying the communications strategy and portfolio to incorporate other media such as newspaper inserts, social media, podcasts, radio, and TV spots.*

Responding to the Site Review Team's suggestion, in summer 2011 Washington Sea Grant created Facebook and YouTube pages for access from WSG's website. WSG communicators maintain the Facebook site, <http://www.facebook.com/WaSeaGrant>, which 90 viewers have "liked" to date. WSG also created a Facebook page for its partnership with Washington Parks and Recreation to increase use of vessel pumpout facilities (<http://pumpoutwashington.org/>). The six videos posted on the WSG YouTube channel, <http://www.youtube.com/user/WashingtonSeaGrant>, have received about 1,000 views.

WSG currently is redesigning its website to feature more video capability and interactivity. New video opportunities are planned in conjunction with a research project on harmful algal blooms and a communications initiative on aquatic invasive species. Our staff is working with others in the College to produce a series of podcasts featuring stories from college units and is developing the capability to produce podcasts for WSG's own website. Due to budget issues, WSG has been less active in purchasing advertising, such as newspaper inserts and electronic media spots. "Free" media continues to be effective, with 80 stories printed or broadcast from March through November 2011. We will continue to explore cost-effective ways to partner with media outlets to help spread WSG's messages.

*The SRT suggests WA SG consider hosting an event (e.g., symposium, seminar, or other venues) to highlight the variety and quality of its research outcomes and impacts, and to facilitate discussions with potential users of the information.*

Since the SRT review, WSG has worked with partner organizations to convene or plan several workshops and symposia on critical research topics to provide best available science for management decision-making, policy setting, research prioritization, industry practices and public education. Topics of recent and upcoming events include climate change and fisheries, Puget Sound social science priorities, ocean acidification, geoduck aquaculture and shellfish production effects on the environment. The events highlight

WSG research and facilitate discussion with stakeholders and among researchers. In early 2013, WSG will be working with other West Coast programs to convene the Fourth Working Waterfront Conference in Tacoma, WA. In addition, WSG's public "Sound Science" lectures continue to bring science to rural communities.

In 2012, WSG staff will explore the feasibility of hosting a symposium, seminar series or science café that focuses on WSG-funded research projects and users. A web search of the network indicates that approximately half of the Sea Grant programs list this type of dedicated or partnered research event, and we will draw on the experiences of the network to determine the costs and benefits of the various approaches.

*The Seattle area has the largest concentration of NOAA employees outside of Silver Spring, MD. The SRT suggests that WA SG more actively explore partnership opportunities with all NOAA line offices in Seattle.*

WSG currently has ongoing partnerships with offices within NOAA Fisheries, the National Ocean Service, NOAA Research and the National Weather Service. Recent joint projects include a climate vulnerability assessment with the Olympic Coast National Marine Sanctuary, a social science indicator project with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center and a series of events on ocean acidification with Pacific Marine Environmental Laboratory scientists. WSG Communications has partnered with NOAA Climate Services and the Office of Response and Restoration to produce web and magazine articles. WSG will continue to actively explore opportunities to work with all NOAA line offices in Seattle.

*The SRT commends the work WA SG has done to stimulate social science research, and suggests the program continue to cultivate and expand its leadership in human dimensions of coastal and ocean issues. For example, WA SG could play a leadership role in researching social issues surrounding aquaculture in general, and geoduck cultivation in particular.*

Working with the Northwest Fisheries Science Center and the UW School of Marine and Environmental Affairs, WSG has completed selection of a post-doctoral fellow. The fellow will direct a two-year program to identify indicators of human wellbeing for use in integrated ecosystem assessments of Puget Sound and the California Current. In addition to the indicator project, WSG is expanding aquaculture-related social science as part of the development of a Northwest aquaculture network. A contract is pending with Washington State University for a regional survey of public perceptions of aquaculture, and we are pursuing a social science position within the Marine Advisory Services to work on aquaculture issues. The new MAS scientist will also begin efforts to build WSG social science capacity for addressing other program needs.

*The SRT encourages WA SG to work with investigators at state academic institutions other*



*than UW to help develop their ability to submit competitive proposals to WA SG.*

Despite WSG presentations at a number of research institutions across the state, UW scientists continue to be the primary recipients of WSG research funds. As we plan for the 2013 proposal selection process, WSG staff will develop a strategy for engaging researchers at a broader range of state academic institutions that support research programs relevant to WSG's mission.

*The SRT urges WA SG to consider inviting the NOAA Sea Grant program officer to participate in its management and staff meetings and to share the monthly activity reports with her.*

Based on conversations with our current program officer, we are willing to explore options for more effective program officer participation in WSG management and staff meetings and shared program information. WSG meetings and monthly activity reports cover a wide range of topics at a high level of detail. The following options could offer a balance to improve understanding without creating information overload:

- Program officer participation in a management team meeting on a monthly basis to discuss new developments and information
- Notification of staff and advisory committee meeting dates and agenda to allow possible program officer participation in relevant meeting sections
- One- to two-page monthly summaries highlighting WSG staff activities.

Thank you for the time and opportunity to consider and respond to the SRT report. I am happy to respond to any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Penelope Dalton".

Penelope Dalton  
Director